



FREEDOM HOUSE

Is Democracy in Retreat? Backsliders,
Stagnation, and Various Other
Depressing Topics

Insights from Freedom House Data

Freedom in the World

Overview

- **Since 1972**, annual evaluation of the state of global freedom by assessing political rights and civil liberties
- Methodology derived in large measure from the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**
- Does not rate governments, but rather **real world freedoms** affected by both governmental and non-state actors
- Includes both analytical reports and numerical ratings for 193 countries and 15 select territories



Freedom in the World

Political Rights Checklist

- Electoral Process
- Political Pluralism and Participation
- Functioning of Government

(out of 40 points)



Source:
<http://www.operations.mod.uk/telic/images/misc/voting.jpg>

Freedom in the World

Civil Liberties Checklist

- Freedom of Expression and Belief
- Associational and Organizational Rights
- Rule of Law
- Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

(Out of 60 points)



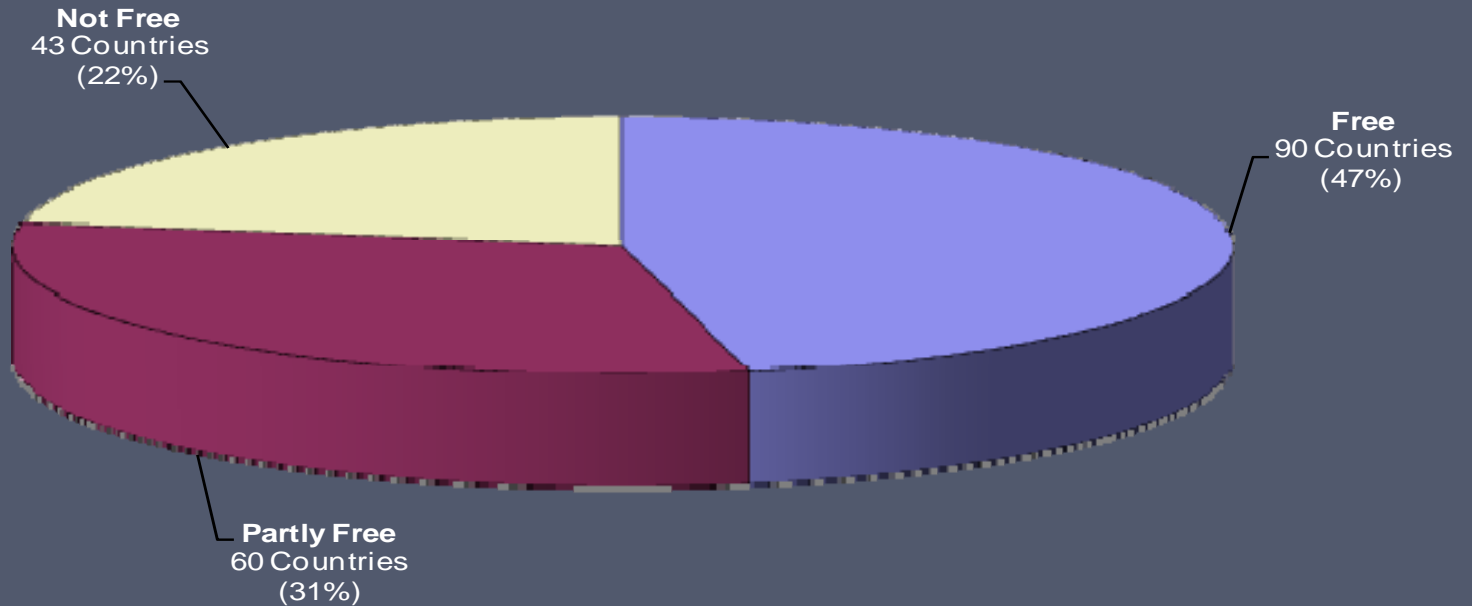
Freedom in the World

Past Positive Trends

- In last 30 years, percentage of Free countries grew from 29% to 47%.
- Percentage of Not Free countries declined from 46% to 22%.

Freedom in the World 2008

Findings



Freedom in the World 2008

Good News

- Number of Free countries steady at 90
- 2 positive status changes: Thailand & Togo improved from NF to PF
- Mauritania joined list of electoral democracies

Freedom in the World 2008

Bad News

- First 2 year consecutive setback in 15 years.
- Declines in freedom (38) as improved (10). 4x
- Palestinian Authority: PF to NF
- Bangladesh, Kenya, and Philippines dropped from list of electoral democracies.

Freedom in the World 2008

Regional Trends: Asia Pacific

Negative Trends:

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Burma
- Malaysia
- Pakistan
- Philippines
- Sri Lanka

Positive Trends:

- Thailand

Freedom in the World 2008

Regional Trends: CEE/FSU

Negative Trends:

- Azerbaijan
- Bosnia
- Kazakhstan
- Latvia
- Russia

Positive Trends:

- Poland

Freedom in the World 2008

Regional Trends: MENA

Negative Trends:

- Egypt
- Israeli Occupied Territories
- Lebanon
- Palestinian Authority Administered Territories
- Syria

Freedom in the World 2008

Regional Trends: Sub-Saharan Africa

Negative Trends

- CAR, Chad, Comoros, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Congo, DROC, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Madagascar, Nigeria, and Somalia

Positive Trends:

- Cote d'Ivoire
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- Sierra Leone
- Togo

Freedom in the World 2008

Regional Trends: The Americas

Negative Trends

- Nicaragua
- Venezuela

Positive Trends

- Haiti

Freedom of the Press

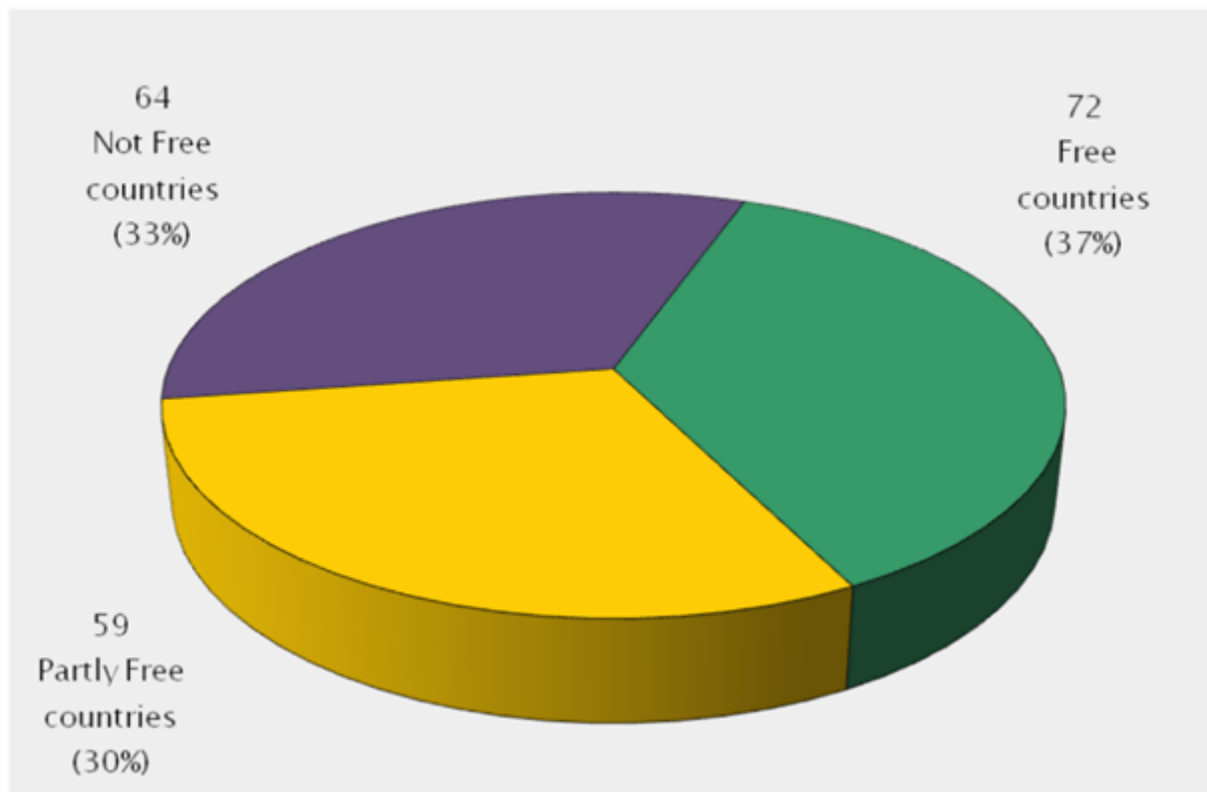
Overview



- Tracking press freedom since 1980.
- Based on a 100 point scale.
- Covers print, broadcast, and Internet media freedoms.
- Examines the “enabling environment” that contributes to press freedom, broken down into legal, political, and economic categories.
- The research and ratings process involves several dozen analysts and senior-level ratings advisors.

Freedom of the Press 2008

Freedom by Country



Freedom of the Press 2008

Positive Findings

- Positive trends in certain regions/countries.
- Media pushback amidst violence, restrictions and repression.
- Newer media forms emerging as a force for openness and central area of contestation.

Freedom of the Press 2008

Negative Findings

- 6 year trend of decline in global press freedom.
- Ratio of setbacks to advances 2:1.
- Setbacks in new democracies and even in established free media environments
- Constraints: violence, impunity, restrictive laws, legal harassment.

Freedom of the Press 2008

Regional Declines and Gains

- Largest region-wide decline was seen in the former Soviet Union
 - Russia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan
- Gains in Middle East and North Africa region
 - Egypt upgraded from NF to PF

Freedom of the Press 2008
More Declines

The Americas: Guyana, Mexico

Sub-Saharan Africa: Benin, CAR, Niger

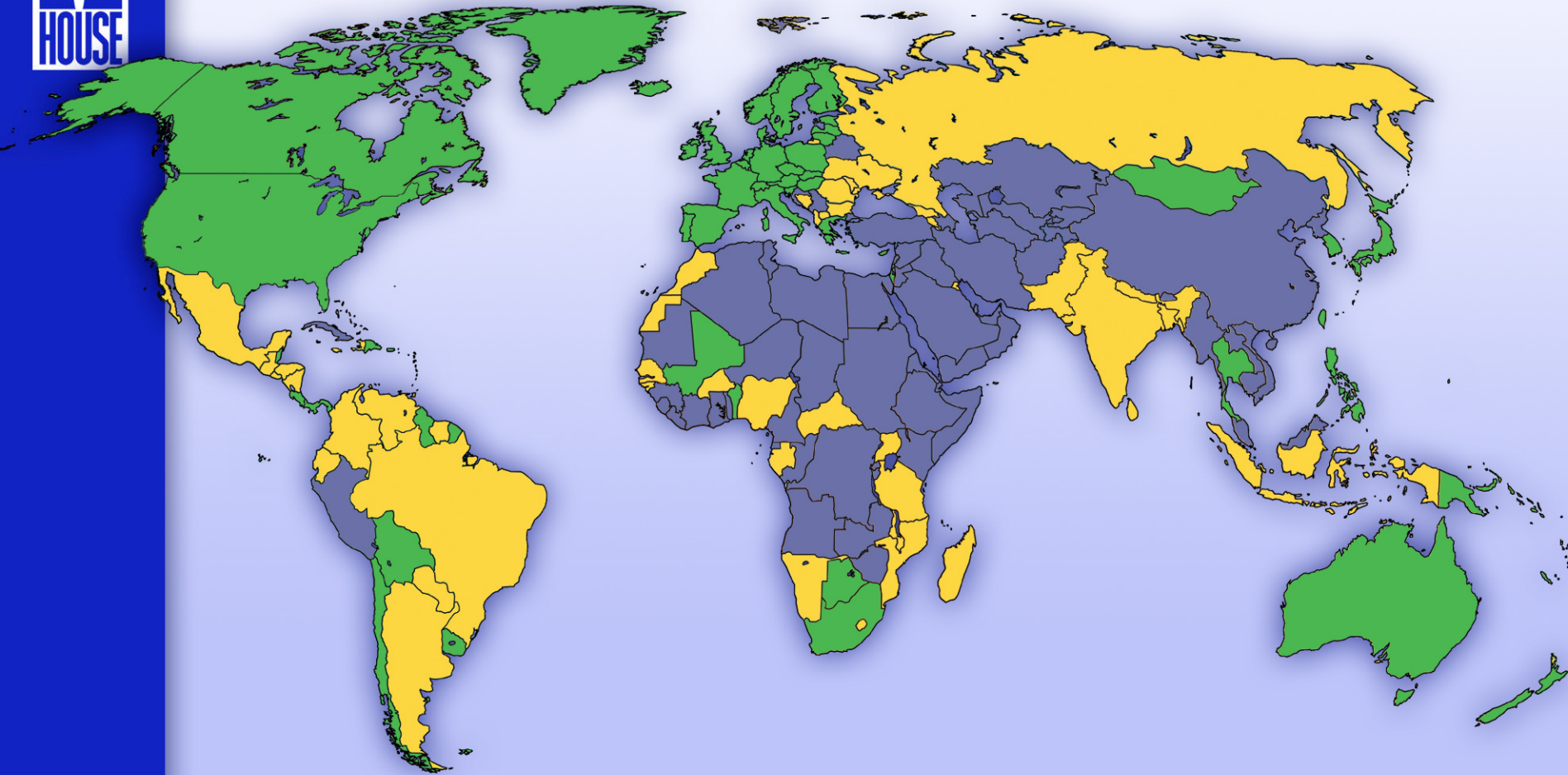
Asia: Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka

Comparison of Global Surveys

- Recent declines shown in FITW survey also reflected in FH's annual FOTP survey.
- **Declines in press freedom in last decade – an indicator for broader freedom decline “canary in the coalmine” .**

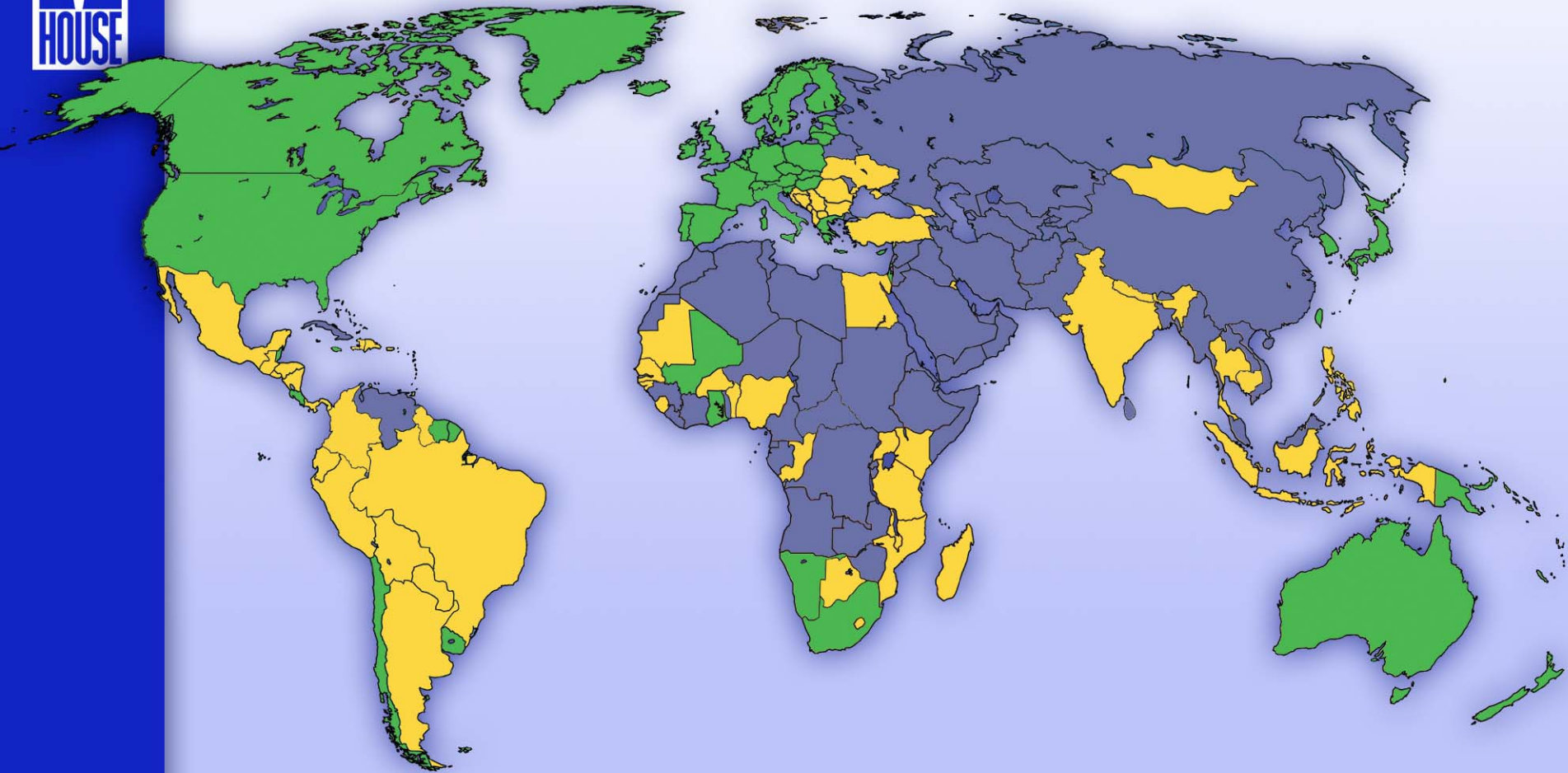


Global Press Freedom 1999



Free Partly Free Not Free N/A

Global Press Freedom 2008



 Free

Partly Free

Not Free

N/A

Freedom Stagnation

- Continued weakness of democratic institutions even after the holding of democratic elections.
- Problems – corruption, weak rule of law.

Backsliders: From Free to Not Free

- Argentina
- Chile
- Burkina Faso
- Gambia
- Ghana
- Grenada
- Guatemala
- Guyana
- Lebanon
- Maldives
- Nigeria
- Seychelles
- Suriname
- Thailand
- Nepal
- **Currently Not Free:**
Maldives

Backsliders: Free-PF: Still PF

- Malaysia (1974)
- Guatemala (1974)
- Seychelles (1977)
- Turkey (1980)
- Burkina Faso (1980)
- Sri Lanka (1981)
- Nigeria (1984)
- Fiji (1987)
- Colombia (1989)
- Bangladesh (1993)
- Zambia (1993)
- Gambia (1994)
- Honduras (1999)
- Malawi (1999)
- Venezuela (1999)
- Ecuador (2000)
- Solomon Islands (2000)
- Bolivia (2003)
- Papua New Guinea (2003)
- Philippines (2005)
- Thailand (2005)

Freedom in the World: Stagnation

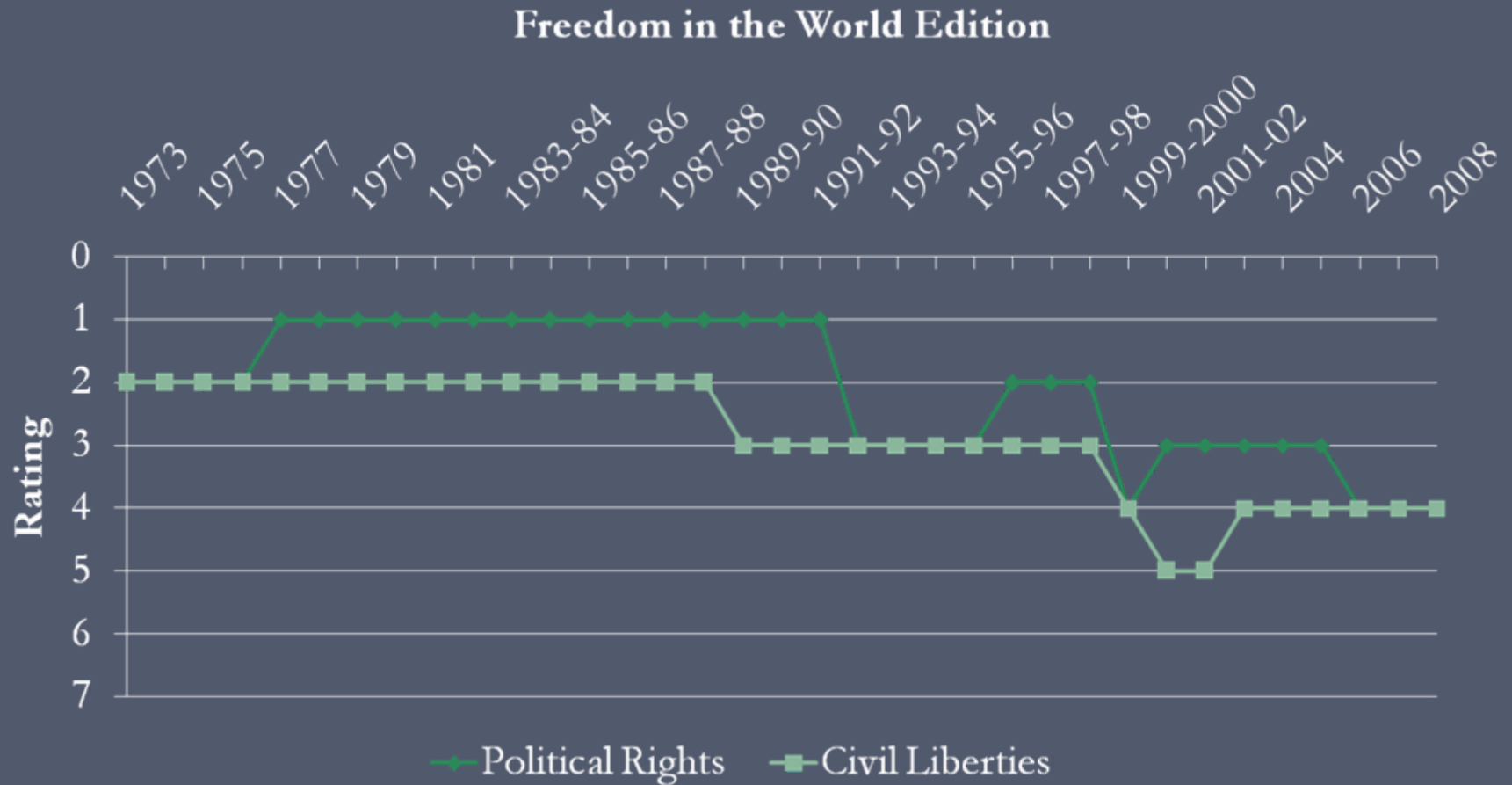
8 Countries Always Partly Free:

- Armenia
- East Timor
- Macedonia
- Moldova
- Morocco
- Nicaragua
- Singapore
- Tonga

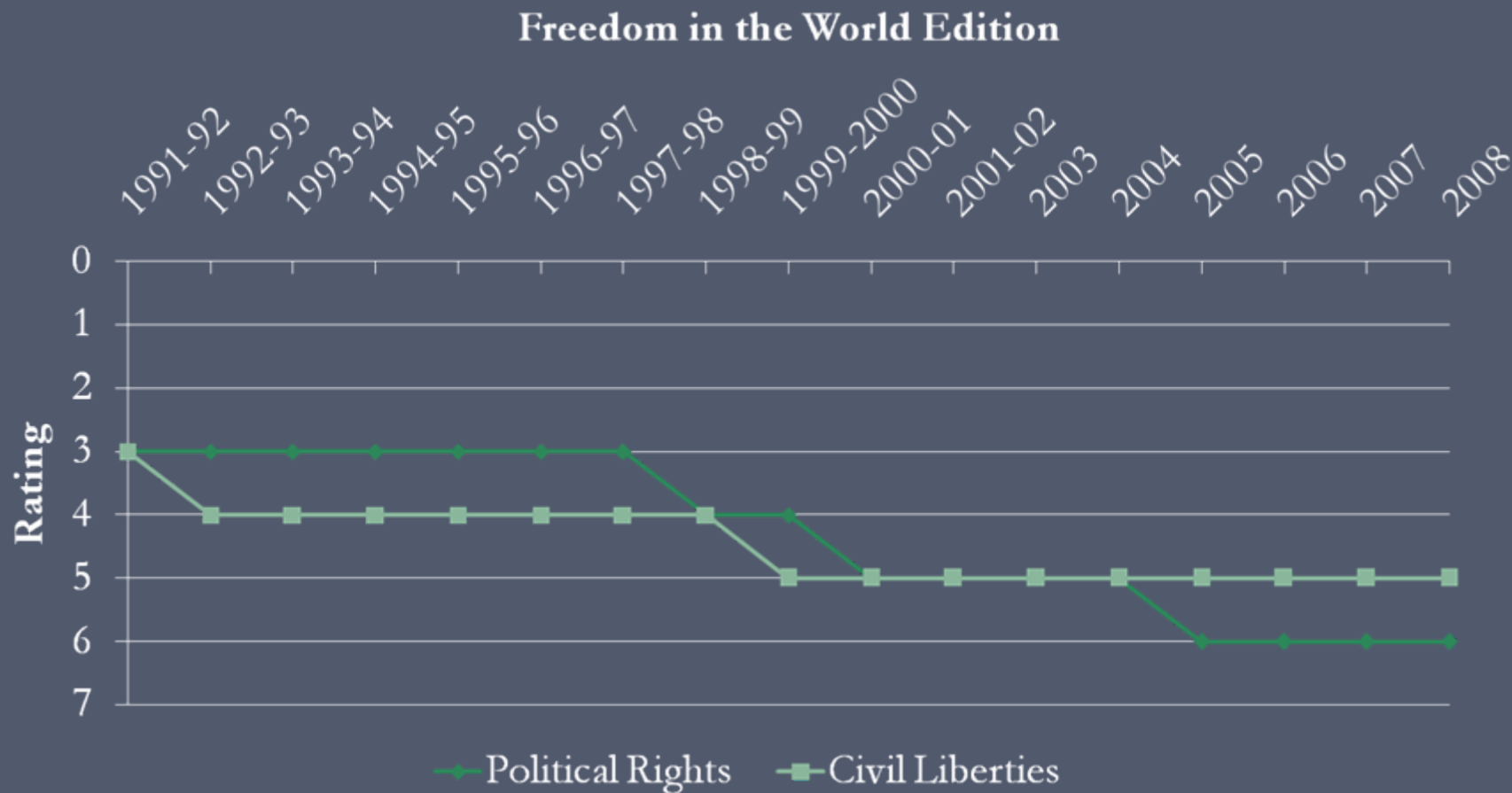
Countries Stalled at Partly Free for 10 Years or More

- Madagascar: 26 years since NF
- Jordan: 19 years since NF
- Paraguay: 19 years since NF
- Mozambique: 14 years since NF
- Georgia: 16 years since NF
- Kuwait: 16 years since NF
- Uganda: 14 years since NF

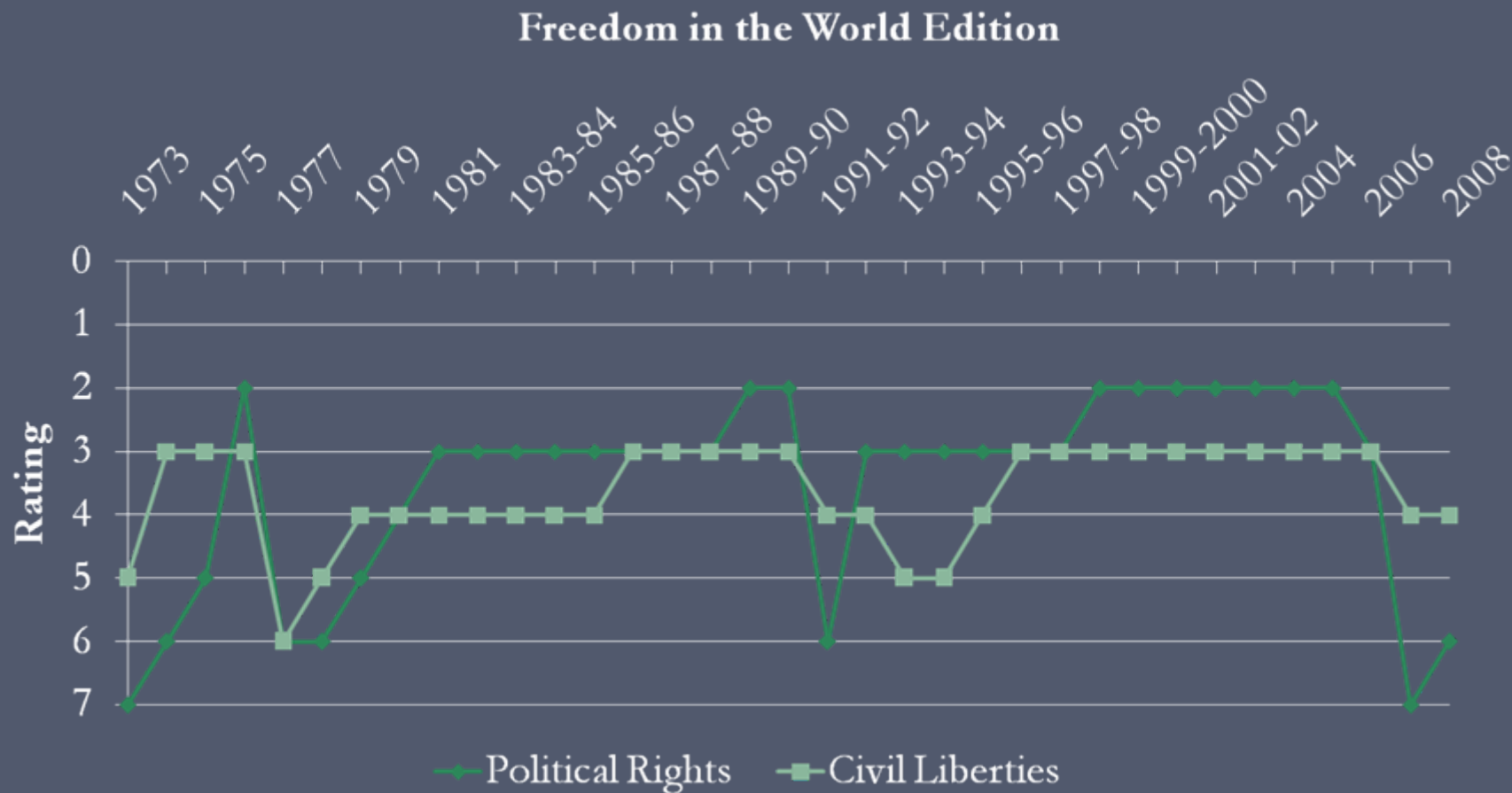
Freedom in Venezuela, 1973-2008



Freedom in Russia, 1991-2008

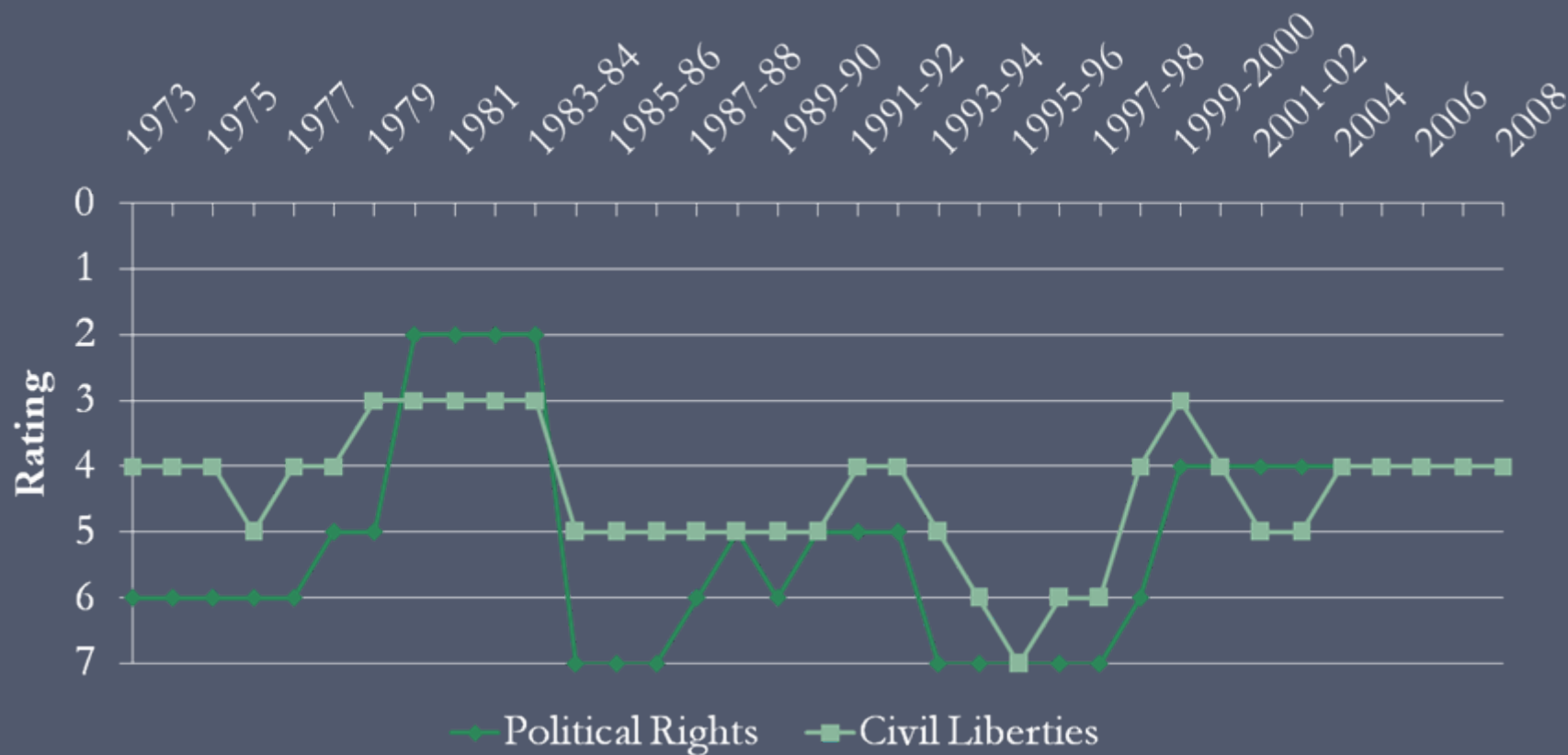


Freedom in Thailand, 1973-2008

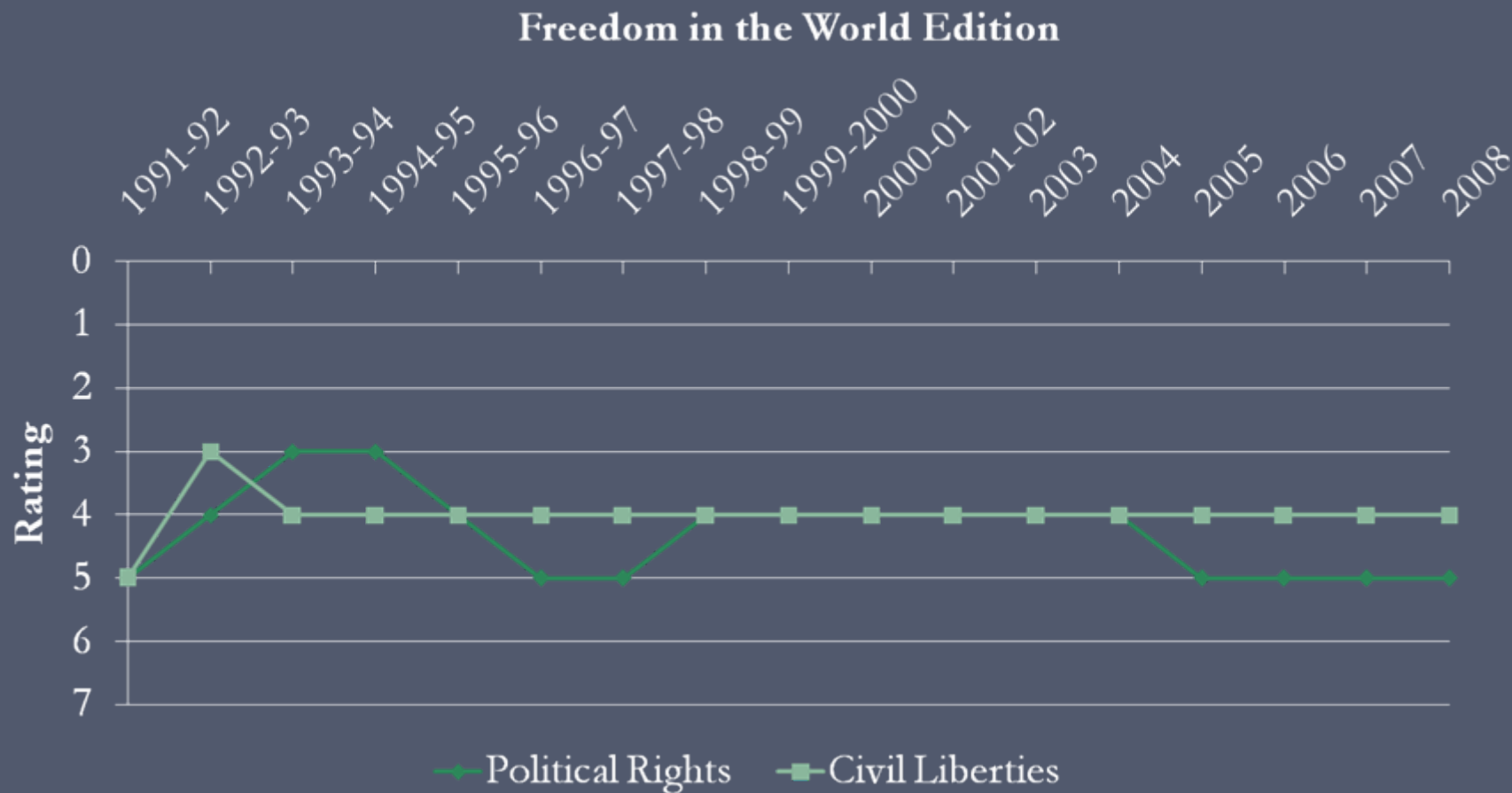


Freedom in Nigeria, 1973-2008

Freedom in the World Edition



Freedom in Armenia, 1991-2008



Should we Throw in the Towel?

- Not a time of euphoria, but not time of massive reversals – depends on countries – beware of trend mongering and over categorizing.
- Civil society and media fighting back – may not be apparent in big score changes in FIW. New types of repression.
- Lets not abandon elections but focus on how to make them more competitive.